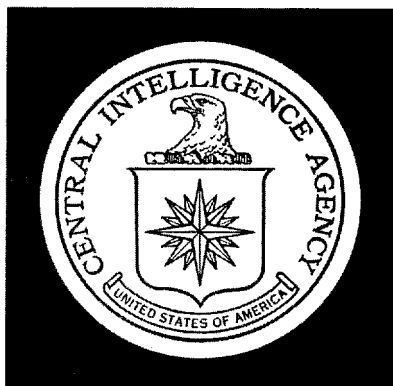


**Top Secret** //



*MCD*

25X1A



DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

## MEMORANDUM

### *The Situation in Vietnam*

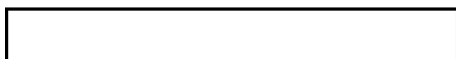
ARMY review(s) completed.

**Top Secret**

110

18 May 1967

25X1A



25X1

Approved For Release 2005/08/17 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002000010011-1

Approved For Release 2005/08/17 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002000010011-1

25X1A

Information as of 1600  
18 May 1967

25X1

### HIGHLIGHTS

US and South Vietnamese units have encountered heavy enemy resistance as two new operations were launched in the area of the DMZ on 17 May.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
US Marine positions in northeastern Quang Tri Province were hit again on 17-18 May with mortar and rocket fire resulting in American casualties of 11 killed and 41 wounded (Paras. 1-2). Allied forces, spearheaded by five US Marine battalions, have launched a major coordinated offensive--Operations BEAU CHARGER and HICKORY--against an estimated 9,000 North Vietnamese regulars in the southern DMZ/northeastern Quang Tri Province combat theater (Paras. 3-5). A US platoon was apparently overrun by Communist forces in southwestern Pleiku Province on 18 May (Paras. 6-7). Various intelligence reports suggest the enemy may attack allied installations on 19 May--Ho Chi Minh's birthday (Paras. 8-11).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:  
The first round of elections for hamlet chiefs began on 14 May (Para. 1). The Constituent Assembly is scheduled to begin debate tomorrow on the upper house election laws (Para. 2).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:  
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

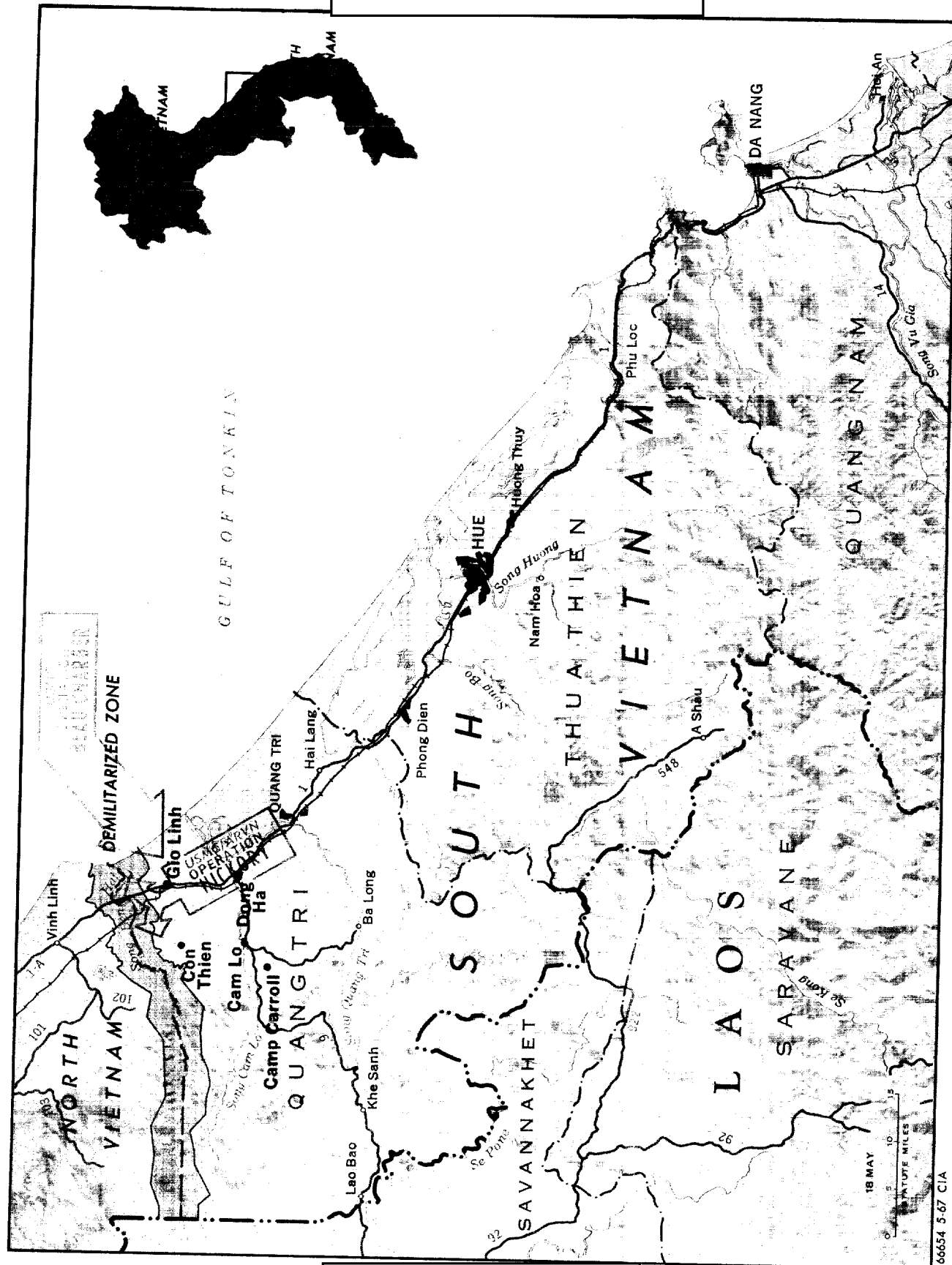
V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

VI. Other Major Aspects: The Cambodian Government may be increasing its efforts to limit rice smuggling to the Viet Cong (Paras. 1-3).

25X1A

25X1

25X1



25X1

25X1A

I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US Marine positions near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in the northeastern quadrant of Quang Tri Province were again subjected to intensive North Vietnamese rocket and mortar bombardment on 17-18 May.

2. The heaviest attack occurred at Dong Ha, the forward headquarters of the 3rd Marine Division and the command post of Operation PRAIRIE IV, located approximately eight miles south of the DMZ. An estimated 150 rounds of 140-mm. rocket fire struck the base's airfield, radar, and POL complexes during a 30-minute predawn bombardment on 18 May, resulting in US casualties of 11 killed and 41 wounded. Rocket and mortar attacks of less intensity were directed against Camp Carroll, Gio Linh, and Cam Lo, with no significant casualties or damage reported.

3. In an effort to relieve the sharply intensified NVA pressure on allied forces and static defensive positions in the DMZ/northern Quang Tri Province area, US Marine and ARVN units have launched two new coordinated major ground operations. Operation BEAU CHARGER, an amphibious and heliborne assault conducted by one US Marine battalion landing team supported by a medium helicopter squadron, commenced on 17 May (EDT) some 14 miles north-northwest of Quang Tri city. Operation HICKORY with four battalions of the US 3rd Marine Division and five ARVN battalions participating, also commenced on 17 May in an area three miles to the west of BEAU CHARGER.

4. The concept of the two-pronged allied offensive calls for a surprise attack in column formation into the DMZ, north to the southern bank of the Ben Hai River, thence turning southward on a broad front to search out and destroy North Vietnamese forces and military installations in the southern portion of the zone. Plans also call for the evacuation of all noncombatants in the operational areas to Cam Lo via Dong Ha. An estimated 9,000 NVA regulars,

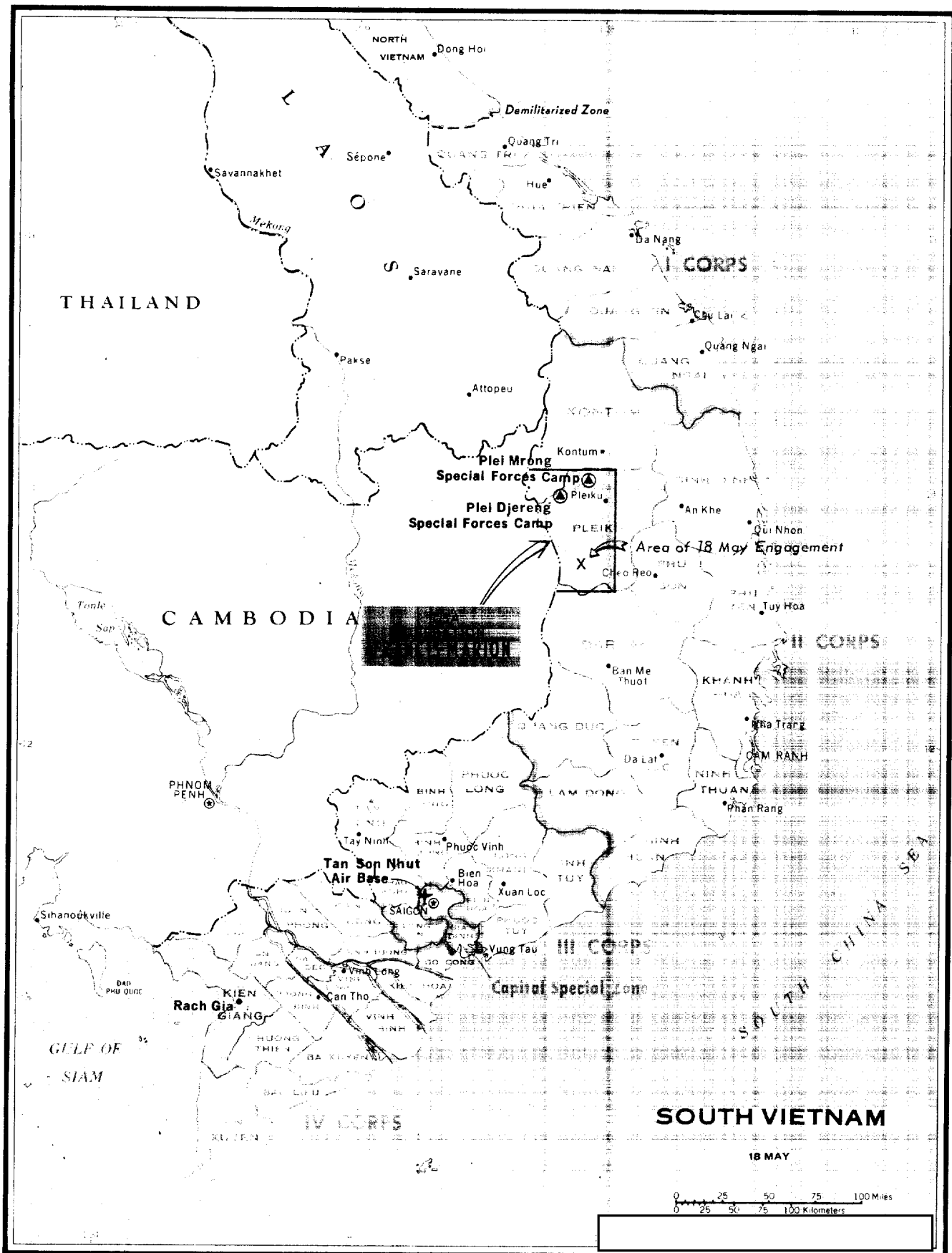
25X1

are believed to be present in the BEAU CHARGER - HICKORY area of operations.

18 May 1967

I-1

25X1A



25X1A

5. According to late reports, two of the four US Marine battalions engaged in Operation HICKORY have established heavy contact with an estimated two NVA battalions northwest of Con Thien along the DMZ. No further information is presently available. Elsewhere, enemy resistance to allied sweep elements has varied from light to moderate, with no significant actions reported.

An American Patrol Overrun in Pleiku Province

6. A platoon from a rifle company of the US 4th Infantry Division, participating in the long-term border-surveillance operation named FRANCIS MARION, engaged an estimated battalion-sized Communist force while patrolling an area 35 miles southwest of Pleiku on 18 May. The remainder of the company unsuccessfully attempted to reach the platoon and shortly thereafter, contact with the American unit was lost. Initial casualty reports list three Americans killed and 21 wounded as the action continues. Enemy losses are unknown.

7. It is not yet known if this engagement is an attempt by the Communists to launch a major offensive in the central highlands or if the US patrol discovered an enemy base camp or another sensitive enemy area. Elements subordinate to the Communist B-3 Front have been recently noted deploying into southwestern Pleiku Province.

Enemy Attacks Planned for 19 May, Ho Chi Minh's Birthday

8. Communist units intend to attack Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Air Base, the US Special Forces camps at Plei Djereng and Plei Mrong in Pleiku Province, and Rach Gia city, the capital of Kien Giang Province on 19 May, the date of Ho Chi Minh's birthday

The recent Communist build-up in the vicinity of the

18 May 1967

25X1A

25X1A

Marine base at Con Thien near the Demilitarized Zone suggests that enemy plans may also have included a large-scale attack at this position on the 19th.

9. The Viet Cong battalion which is said to be deploying to attack Tan Son Nhut reportedly is armed with two weapons which have a range of "15 kilometers." US military sources note that this report may refer to the large Soviet 122-mm. [redacted] rocket. The Communists have used this weapon in the DMZ area and more recently, in last week's attack on the Bien Hoa Air Base, northeast of Saigon.

25X1

25X1

10. The [redacted] rocket is well suited for Viet Cong use and poses a particular threat to allied installations because individual, mobile launchers can be used to fire the rocket. The weapon has a range of about ten miles and is thought to be more accurate than other comparable Soviet rockets.

25X1

11. [redacted] warning of attacks on the Pleiku Province Special Forces camps states that a 300-man Viet Cong artillery battalion moved from Cambodian territory into an area south of the camps on 5 May. The battalion was reportedly armed with 75-mm. artillery and 82-mm. mortars.

18 May 1967

I-3

25X1A

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Following the successful completion of elections for village councils during the month of April, similar contests for hamlet chiefs and, in some cases, their deputies began on 14 May. Approximately 80 percent of the registered electorate turned out to elect 1,000 chiefs in the first round of voting for the lowest echelon administrative unit. Two contestants were reportedly killed by the Viet Cong, but Communist antielection activity otherwise appeared to be light. The voting will continue for the next four Sundays in approximately 3,500 additional hamlets. The total number of hamlets in South Vietnam is estimated to be between 12,000 and 14,000.

Regulations for Upper House Elections

2. On 19 May, the Constituent Assembly is scheduled to begin debate on the regulations governing the elections for the upper house of the legislature. In the draft of the articles prepared by one of the assembly subcommittees, no specific date is fixed for the elections, although the Directorate has firmly expressed its desire to hold them concurrently with the presidential election.

18 May 1967

II-1

25X1A

Approved For Release 2005/08/17 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002000010011-1

III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

18 May 1967

III-IV-V - 1

Approved For Release 2005/08/17 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002000010011-1

25X1A

VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The Cambodian Government may be increasing its efforts to limit rice smuggling to the Viet Cong. |

two

Overseas Chinese were deported to Hong Kong on 11 May for large-scale profiteering and smuggling activities which included the smuggling of rice to the Viet Cong. It is not clear to what extent the two may have actually been involved.

2. It is doubtful that Phnom Penh can seriously curtail rice smuggling to the Viet Cong, although the elimination of key figures in the smuggling operation may temporarily impede the flow. Such an attempt would, in Sihanouk's view, substantiate his avowed "neutrality."

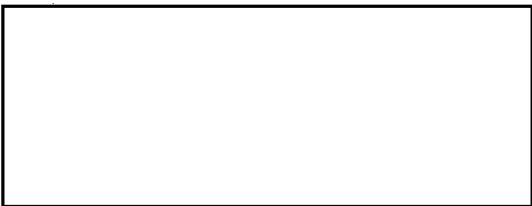
3. The deportations are probably part of a wider effort by Sihanouk to warn leftist elements not to engage in illegal or subversive activities detrimental to the Cambodian Government or economy.

18 May 1967

VI-1

25X1

**Top Secret** Approved For Release 2005/08/17 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002000010011-1



**Top Secret**